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ABSTRACT

This collection of three conference papers explores the myth of the educational excellence of Asian Americans. "The National Perspective" (L. Wright) contends that the educational success of Asian Americans is not a myth and that lessons drawn from the example of the academic achievement of Asian Americans can be applied to American education across the board. The following themes are common among the Asian American community: (1) love of learning; (2) love of the United States; (3) gratitude for the freedom and opportunities that this country offers; and (4) deep determination to succeed. "A Perspective of an Asian/American Educator" (T. Barrozo) argues that the educational excellence of Asian Americans is both a myth and a reality. He suggests, however, that even a favorable stereotype is a poor substitute for an appreciation of the rich cultural diversity exists among Asian nations and cultures. Furthermore, the "model minority" stereotype has discouraged the full participation of Asian Americans in areas other than mathematics and science. "A Perspective of an Asian/American Academician" (C. Izawa) reviews the relationship of academic achievement to genetic factors, motivational factors, and environmental factors, including cultural heritage and historical background. Findings indicate that any person of any color or of any national origin with normal intelligence who works extraordinarily hard and strives for excellence will achieve a high level of success in education. Statistical data are presented in three tables. Biographies of the authors are included. A 38-item annotated bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS: MYTH OR REALITY?

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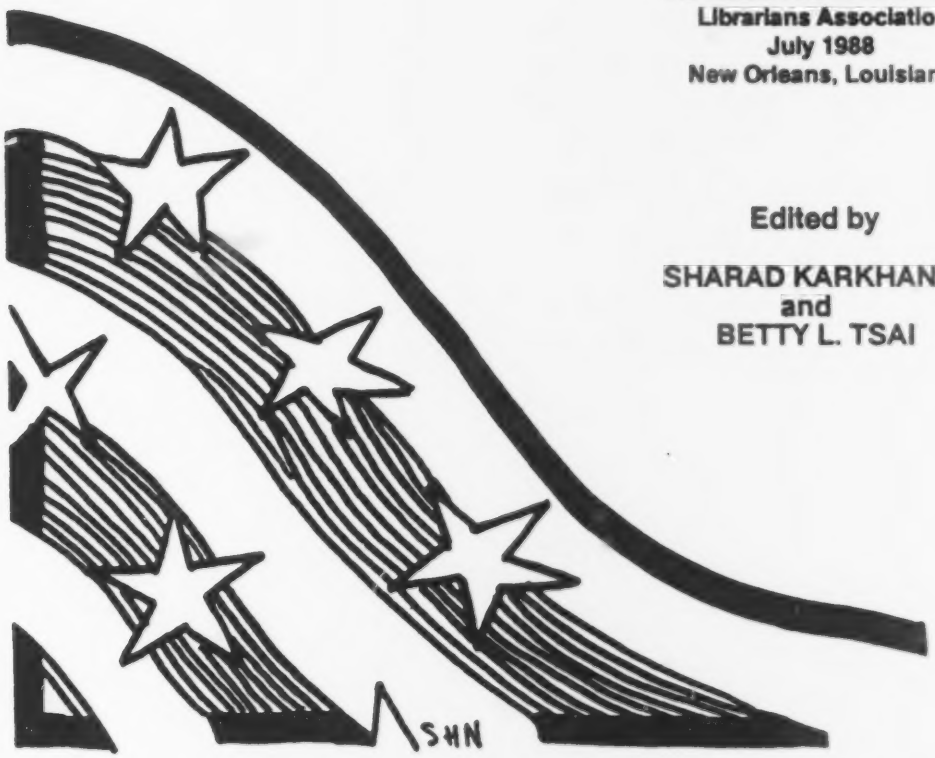

Edited by

SHARAD KARKHANIS
and
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Betty L. Tsai,
President, APALA

PROGRAM

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS: MYTH OR REALITY?

Monday, July 11, 1988, 2:00 - 4:00 P.M.

NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY AUDITORIUM

Presiding: Betty L. Tsai, APALA President

Welcome: Betty L. Tsai, President

Master of Ceremony: Sharad Karkhanis

Speakers:

Under Secretary Linus Wright, U.S. Department of Education

Dr. Tobin Barrozo, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Metropolitan State College
Denver, Colorado

Dr. Chizuko Izawa, Professor of Psychology,
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana

CULTURAL PROGRAM AND RECEPTION

4:00 - 5:30 P.M.

Welcome Betty L. Tsai, APALA President

Performances Camelia Dance Troupe
Filipino American Association of St. Tammany,
Slidell, Louisiana

Introduction of dances: Conchita Pineda, APALA Vice President

Itik-Itik

Salakot

Tinikling

Sayaw - Sa - Bangko

RECEPTION (Admission by ticket, donation: $5.00)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction.....5

II. Opening Remarks by Betty L. Tsai.....7

III. Educational Excellence of Asian Americans: Myth or Reality?

a) Linus Wright: The National Perspective.....8

b) Tobin Barrozo: A Perspective of an Asian/American Educator.....13

c) Chizuko Izawa: A Perspective of an Asian/American Academician.....17

d) Augurio Collantes: An Annotated Bibliography.....26

APALA PUBLICATIONS

Proceedings of Conferences:

1) Asian/Pacific American Librarian: A Cross Cultural Perspective. Papers of the 1984 program of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, June 25, 1984, Dallas, Texas. Edited by Lourdes Y. Collantes.

2) Human Rights: Minorities in New York City -- A Microcosm of the World. Papers of the 1986 Program of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, June 30,1986, New York, N.Y. Edited by Augurio L. Collantes and Suzine Har Nicolescu.

3) How to Avoid Dead End in Your Career: An Asian American Perspective, and Library Services for the Asian American Community. Papers of the 1987 program of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, June 1987, San Francisco, Ca. Edited by Sharad Karkhanis.

Membership Director:

APALA Membership Directory, published annually by the association.

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APALA NEWSLETTER, 1980- publsihed quarterly.

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Ms. Conchita Pineda, President
APALA
225 East 46th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

INTRODUCTION

For the annual convention in New Orleans, the leadership of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association decided to focus on an extremely important and timely topic "The Educational Excellence of Asian Americans: Myth or Reality?" in an attempt to explore such issues as: Are Asian Americans indeed achieving unprecedented successes in education, or is it a perception based on a few isolated success stories? If it is indeed a fact that Asian American students do excel better than the rest of the population in America, what are the factors which contribute to their success? Are the family cohesiveness, upbringing, cultural uniqueness and religious traditions contributing to this success? Or, is it the same drive for success similar to the immigrant groups who came to the American shores in the past? What lessons can be learned from the Asian American experience that can be applied to children of other immigrant groups so that they too can better themselves in education? By and large, these and other questions have been addressed to in the papers presented here.

Our first speaker, Mr. Linus Wright, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education places the national perspective on the issue of educational excellence of Asian Americans and contends at the outset that the educational excellence of Asian Americans and "their success is no myth, and that there are lessons that can be drawn from the example of their educational achievement that can be applied to American education across the board." He agrees that generalizations can be hazardous. However, he points out that certain themes are common among the Asian American community - "a love of learning, a love of the United States, a feeling of genuine gratitude for the freedom and opportunities that this country offers, and above all, a deep determination 'to make something out of oneself.'"

Dr. Tobin Barrozo, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado on the other hand argues that "the educational excellence of Asian Americans is neither myth nor reality, but both myth and reality." He also observes that "alleged educational excellence (of Asian Americans) is a poor substitute for the display and appreciation of the rich cultural diversity which exists among Asian nations and cultures." He contends that "if the Asian Americans are the 'model minority,' if they are conceived of as separate and apart from other Americans, be they Chicano, Black, American Indian or Anglo, they are prevented from full participation in the new form of higher education which has arisen and only could emerge in America." He concludes that "Asian Americans should continue to excel, where they have ability; they should excel, as all other human beings do, not only in mathematics and science. The sentiments, perception and capacity for creating art, literature, music and discoveries in the social sciences are not absent from the Asian American heart."

Dr. Chizuko Izawa, Professor of Psychology at Tulane University in New Orleans presents her arguments supported by demographic, educational and sociological data in considering genetic factors, environmental factors (including the cultural heritage and historical background), and motivational factors as they

relate to the educational excellence of Asian Americans. She concludes her remarks by stressing that "it is not necessary to have yellow skin and slanted eyes to excel in education. Any person of any color or of any national origin with normal intelligence who works extraordinarily hard and strives for excellence will achieve a high level of success in education."

A significant contribution was also made by Professor Augurio Collantes of the Hostos Community College in New York by preparing an annotated bibliography of selected sources on educational excellence of Asian Americans. The seven-page bibliography is also included with the proceedings.

It is our firm belief that papers presented here have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the issues in educational excellence of Asian Americans. It is hoped that these proceedings, perhaps the first on this subject, would encourage further discussion, research and dialogue on the issues confronting Asian Americans.

Sharad Karkhanis

Betty L. Tsai

OPENING REMARKS

Betty L. Tsai
President, APALA

Honorable Speakers, APALA members and friends:

Welcome to the 1988 APALA's annual program. Our theme this year is the "Educational Excellence of Asian Americans: Myth or Reality?" We are very honored to have invited most distinguished speakers: Mr. Linus Wright, Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Tobin Gonzales Barrozo, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Metropolitan State College of Denver, and Dr. Chizuko Izawa, Professor of Psychology at Tulane University.

The Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) was founded in 1980. It is affiliated with the American Library Association and conducts its annual program and membership meeting in conjunction with the ALA annual conference. APALA attempts to promote the following six major objectives:

1. Provides a forum for discussion of problems and concerns of Asian/Pacific American librarians,

2. Provides a forum for the exchange of ideas among Asian/Pacific American librarians and other librarians,

3. Supports and encourages library services to the Asian/Pacific American communities,

4. Recruits and supports Asian/Pacific Americans in the library information science professions,

5. Seeks funding for scholarships and fellowships in library information science schools for Asian/Pacific American librarians, and

6. Provides a vehicle whereby Asian/Pacific American librarians can cooperate with other associations and organizations having similar or allied interests.

There will be a cultural program and a reception immediately following the presentations of our distinguished speakers. Please stay and join us to celebrate this memorable occassion.

Thank you.

LINUS WRIGHT

A native of Savoy, Texas, Mr. Linus Wright was nominated by President Reagan as Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education and confirmed by the Senate and sworn in November 1987 to oversee the daily operations of the Education Department's 4,500 employees. He also plays an important role in advising Secretary of Education William Bennett on all major issues, programs and management-decisions made at the Department. Mr. Wright received his bachelor's and Master's degrees from Austin College in 1949 and 1951 respectively, and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the same institution in 1979. He was awarded another honorary doctorate degree in 1979 by Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. From 1978 to his appointment as Under Secretary, Mr. Wright served as Superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District. Previously, he was superintendent for administration for the Houston School system from 1974 to 1978 and chief financial officer from 1971 to 1974. Mr. Wright has received numerous awards for his work in civic affairs and was named by the Executive Educator magazine as one of the nation's "Top 100 Educators." He also served on the 32-member Urban Superintendents Network of the U.S. Department of Education and was a member of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education in Texas.

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS: MYTH OR REALITY?

The National Perspective

by
Linus Wright
Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education

Thank you Dr. Karkhanis. It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to be here this evening.

Today, I want to focus on the educational achievements of the Asian Americans, and the important lessons we can draw from their success. For I believe that their success is no myth, and that there are lessons that can be drawn from the example of their educational achievement that can be applied to American education across the board.

Now, I know that it is very dangerous to generalize about any cultural group. And in the case of "Asian Americans" an umbrella term which actually covers twenty nationalities, and countless ethnic identities, each with its own language and culture generalizations are particularly hazardous. Nevertheless, there are themes that seem to be common among the Asian-American community: a love of learning, a love of the United States, a feeling of genuine gratitude for the freedom and opportunities that this country offers, and, above all, a deep determination "to make something out of oneself."

And, indeed, Asian Americans have made something out of themselves. According to the 1980 census, Asians have the highest median family income of any group in the country. This in turn reflects the educational achievement of Asian-Americans: three quarters of Asian-Americans are high school graduates, and fully 35 percent of the Asian Americans age 25 and older have graduated from college more than twice the proportion of other Americans.

What can explain this success? Clearly, many fashionable theories about educational and social achievement, theories which emphasize the deterministic role of class, of the environment, of material factors, of "society" do not apply here. On the contrary, what I believe the success of Asian Americans demonstrates is the importance of values -- values which people carry with them in their heads and in their hearts, values which remain with them when their homeland is just a memory.

One such value, of particular significance in educational performance, is the existence of close ties between parents and children, and the willingness of parents to sacrifice for the sake of their children's education. At the Department of Education, we have been saying for some time now that in education, the parent is the child's most important teacher, even the indispensable teacher. There is by now a good deal of evidence, both statistical and anecdotal, which emphasizes the concern of Asian American parents for their children's schooling.

For example, school teachers and principals in Riverdale, New York, were surprised to discover that each Asian American family there was buying two sets of textbooks. After doing a little investigating, they found that one set was for the child and the second set was for the mother, who could better coach her child if she worked during the day to keep up with his lessons. These teachers said that children entering school in the Fall with no English ability finished in the Spring at the top of their classes in every subject.

Yet another Asian American value which has a great deal to do with educational success is self-discipline, a willingness to do things the hard way, if that's what's required. A study prepared by Dr. Samuel Peng, of the Department of Education, demonstrated that Asian American high school students spent considerably more time on homework than any other students. Dr. Peng's study also demonstrated that Asian American students were less likely than other students to be absent from school and had higher educational aspirations than other students.

Of course, the virtues which characterize the Asian American community, and account for its --success hard-work, self-discipline, perserverance, industry, respect for family, for learning and for country --are not confined to Asian Americans alone. They are in fact traditional American virtues. These are values familiar to readers of Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography, or to generations of American school children who learned from McGuffy's Reader. They are the virtues preached down through the ages by the greatest Americans. Listen to what the distinguished black American, Frederick Douglas, said one hundred and thirty years ago:

> "What we want is character. It is a thing we must get for ourselves. We must labor for it. It is gained by toil hard toil.... It is attainable: but we must attain it, and attain it each for himself. I cannot for you, and you cannot for me."

Today, Asian Americans are reminding all of us of these fundamental truths.

So far, I have focused on the strengths of the Asian American community. They are considerable, and remarkable. The success of Asian American children in school is a testimony to this fact. But I also want to talk today about what we must do to improve our schools, to continue the reform effort that began five years ago when A Nation At Risk appeared.

The publication of A Nation At Risk sounded an alarm bell across the nation. Our country's educational system was in crisis. Test scores measuring student achievement had fallen continually for two decades. The Basic curriculum that had been the mainstay of American education had eroded, and soft electives had come to replace the teaching of the fundamentals, like math, English and science. Instead of educational excellence, loose standards and educational mediocrity abounded. In the words of the report, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

The appearance of A Nation At Risk in 1983 launched the movement for educational reform and improvement. There has been a lot written and debated since then on what should be done and how we can raise performance. And

some things have been done. Many states have taken steps to raise standards in our schools, and get back on track. But much still remains to be done.

Just this past April, Secretary Bennett presented the President with his update to A Nation At Risk, a report entitled American Education - Making It Work. In this new report the Secretary summed up the achievements we have made in the last five years, and outlined the direction we need to take in the future. Overall, we have made some progress, but it has been too little and too slow in coming. We need to do more. Right now, there are five main areas of reform that we still need to pursue: strengthening content, ensuring equal intellectual opportunity, establishing an ethos of achievement, recruiting and rewarding good teachers and principals, and instituting accountability throughout our educational system.

First, we need to strengthen the content of the curriculum in our schools. We need to get back to teaching the basics, in a program that sets rigorous standards for achievement. We need to stress math and science and English and social studies, the core curriculum. And we can't be deterred from doing this by those who claim elevated standards will only lead to a higher drop-out and failure rate. All our research points in the opposite direction. The challenge of a rigorous curriculum motivates students, no matter what their socio-economic background. When we teach the good books, or the "Good Stuff" as the kids call it, the thrill of learning comes back, and students respond with enthusiasm.

Second, we need to ensure equal intellectual opportunities for all our children. All students, whatever their race or background, have a claim to a good education based upon the solid core curriculum. And striking evidence exists that the higher educational expectations associated with school reform have especially benefitted students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. Yes, we face large challenges. Children from troubled families, troubled neighborhoods, and impoverished circumstances have a longer and a more arduous road to travel. But we must not let misguided sympathy for them lead us to lower our sights for what they can achieve. The tactics we need to employ may have to be changed, but not the goals. Excellence is achievable by all, given the proper opportunities and the right motivation.

Third, we need to establish an ethos of achievement in our schools. Schools will succeed only if they believe they can succeed, if their teachers and principals set a tone of accomplishment through hard work and discipline. Standards, not just academic standards, but standards of conduct and behavior must be set and enforced. Skipping classes, drug use, teen age pregnancies, no discipline in the classroom, trash on campus, all these are signs of a school lacking an ethos of success. But it doesn't have to be this way. We have an abundance of examples of orderly schools throughout America, in all kinds of neighborhoods, where a spirit of achievement and success thrives. In these schools the teachers and the principals believe in the importance of shaping students character as well as their intellect, and they uphold high standards of moral behavior as well as intellectual achievement.

Fourth, we need to recruit and reward good teachers and principals. In any enterprise, whether it's a business or a school, success depends upon competent personnel and able management. The way to achieve this is to concentrate on three basic principles: wider recruitment, demonstrated competence, and pay for performance. For too long we have allowed a rigid certification system to lock out

candidates who are highly talented and could do an excellent job but who are lacking in certain mandated requirements. Alternative certification, which is a means of letting these exceptional people enter the system, has proved a great success. The key is getting the right people for the job, people who are motivated and enthusiastic and have a high degree of knowledge of their subject area.

Finally, we need to institute accountability throughout our educational system. Accountability is accountability for results. It means giving personnel freedom to get a job done however they think it can best be done, and then judging them by how well the job gets done. It means giving more autonomy to principals to run their schools: it means giving teachers more freedom to structure the way they teach in the classrooms. But it also means following up on what happens, rewarding those who do well and increase student learning and achievement, and advising those who don't perform, and if necessary, releasing them from the system. We must establish this link between acts and consequences in our nation's schools. It is essential to getting the results we all want in our schools.

These are the five key areas of reform we need to concentrate on. But we also need to get the public behind these reforms. We can only change things in our democratic system by informing and mobilizing public opinion, and by enlisting the support of concerned groups like you in the Asian/Pacific Librarians Association here today. Asian Americans know the value of a good education, and they have a proud history of enduring sacrifice and hardship to obtain it, for themselves and their children. This spirit and this attitude can serve as an invaluable lesson to all Americans, and can bring encouragement to all of us who work to restore excellence in American education. Thank you all and God Bless.

TOBIN GONZALES BARROZO

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado, an institution of 16,000 students and 450 faculty, Dr. Tobin Gonzales Barrozo was born in Montana of a Filipino father and a Japanese mother. He received his undergraduate education at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Los Angeles, and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Stanford University. Dr. Barrozo also studied at Harvard's Institute for Educational Management. Dr. Barrozo began his career in higher education as an instructor in philosophy at San Francisco State University. He was a research assistant at IMSS, and also taught at Stanford and UCLA. In 1971 he became Chair of the Philosophy Department at the Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York; and in 1976 he was made Director of Computer Assisted instruction. In 1980 Dr. Barrozo became Associate Dean for Academic Development and Research at the William Paterson College in New Jersey, eventually becoming Vice President for Academic Affairs in 1985. From 1986 to 1987, Dr. Barrozo served as Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Metropolitan State College. He was promoted to the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in 1987. Dr. Barrozo's speciality is in mathematical logic. He also has interests in computer science, artificial intelligence and computer applications in education.

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS: MYTH OR REALITY?

A Perspective of an Asian/ American Educator

by
Tobin Barrozo
Provost and Vice President
Metropolitan State College
Denver, Colorado

I have observed the rise and fall of issues in higher education and wondered which among them will endure, which among them embodies a reality not to be washed away by another incoming tide. From my reflections I have distilled principles which have been useful in the determination of whether an issue will endure and embodies an undeniable reality. First, perhaps foremost, one must take the long view; history, the evolution of persistent themes, forms a context in which an issue can be evaluated. Secondary, but no less important, is the recognition that issues must have emotional import, otherwise, they have no ability to gain currency, no ability to capture the human imagination. To persuade you that these principles are useful and that their application to today's issue, the educational excellence of Asian Americans, can be illuminating is one of my objectives; that the educational excellence of Asian Americans is neither myth nor reality, but both myth and reality, is another.

What then is the emotional import of the issue? To answer this question consider who among us would consent to being unable to separate the true from the false, myth from reality? Anxiety sets in whenever the ability to discern the true or real fails. The framing of the issue is emotional; it produces a fundamental anxiety. To escape from this anxiety is the great temptation. To take one side or the other of the issue, to marshal evidence, to refute one's opponents: these are the usual escape routes. That many Asian Americans do succeed in their studies and that some great universities have adopted or contemplate adopting quotas to keep Asians out is evidence for their higher educational excellence. The Asian family, culture and religious traditions are frequently invoked to explain their success. Add to this the dramatic economic success of the Pacific rim countries in an international economy and the argument for the educational excellence of Asian Americans is complete. On the other side of the issue is the recognition that many from other racial or ethnic backgrounds have also succeeded. Throughout American history some immigrant group has succeeded more than others. Worse, the claim of educational excellence for Asian Americans is contradictory with the perduring belief that all human beings are fundamentally equal with respect to potential. Escape from the anxiety the issues provokes is never entirely comfortable: something in the other's argument has the ring of truth. Perhaps, we must simply admit that the educational excellence of Asian Americans is both myth and reality. The arguments for both sides of the issue have a measure of persuasiveness, yet remain disquieting. Sometimes anxiety is best suffered. Enduring anxiety, can understanding, at least, be achieved?

A watershed in the recent history of American higher education had a most inauspicious beginning: the G.I. Bill. Returning from Europe and, ironically, the Pacific, American military personnel were afforded an opportunity to attain a higher education. Many benefitted from the occasion. Many were individuals who traditionally would not have had an opportunity for a college or university

education. More students required an enlarged professoriate and an administration professionally equipped through management seminars conducted at the Harvard School of Business. Because it seemed a good idea and was complementary to the ideals of American democracy, the Federal Government pursued its original impulse and became a major source of the funding of higher education through grants and loans to students. The privilege of a few became a right of many; and, an aura of legitimacy for the enterprise was attained through the Russian's launch of Sputnik. These events in furtherance of liberal, progressive ideals augured a major transfiguration of American Higher Education. The evolution of pluralistic democracy is the driving force behind this transfiguration of the higher learning in America. The alleged educational excellence of Asian Americans must be evaluated in this historical context.

In addition, the professoriate exhibited some ambivalence over the new arrivals to academe: they were not prepared for collegiate success and brought a polymorphous, almost perverse, climate to the campus. Yielding to their inclinations, a number of professors expressed their anguish in books. The author of The Conservative Mind, Russell Kirk, expressed his lament in Decadence and Renewal of the Higher Learning. The philosopher Sidney Hook and his colleagues collected their thoughts in The Idea of the Modern University. Most recently, Allan Bloom knit these stirrings into a book he titled The Closing of The American Mind. Taking as a point of departure C.E.M. Joad's definition of "decadence" as loss of object, Kirk decried a shift of emphasis from the development of mind and spirit as the object of a collegiate or university education; for Kirk the higher learning is essentially an ethical or spiritual oddessey. Sidney Hook et. al. argued that a curriculum could not be constructed to provide liberal learning and meet the needs of a diverse student population. Allan Bloom brought these sentiments of unease together in the thesis that the professoriate has been corrupted by the market place and the present student population is ineducable. With this historical context at hand it is possible to determine whether the Asian American is the "model minority," whether the issue of educational excellence will endure or be judged spurious.

For Kirk, Hook and Bloom the issue is a lively one as they search for students indistinguishable from themselves. They are students prepared to succeed in a college or university like the one they attended. They are students whose families, religious and cultural tradition prize education and liberal learning for itself as object. These professors represent a professoriate devoted to a conception of the higher learning which would exclude rather than include: they oppose the evolution of pluralistic democracy and a transfiguration of higher education. It happens that Asian Americans have many of the valued attributes. For Kirk, Hook and Bloom they sustain the illusion that higher education is not for everyone. From this perspective my first observation on the issue of the educational excellence of Asian Americans is that it provides succor and comfort to those directly opposed to an emergent form of higher education in America that represents access and not privilege.

My second observation is that alleged educational excellence is a poor substitute for the display and appreciation of the rich cultural diversity which exists among Asian nations and cultures. If educational excellence is an attribute of all Asians, than the differences among them is conveniently displaced and forgotten. A stereotype of Asians emerges as beings who are scarcely human, bereft of feelings, mechanical, computing machines. The dangers of such a conception

are evident to anyone who recalls that Nazi propaganda against the Jews had as its principle goal the dehumanization of Jews as a preliminary to creation of feelings of hatred and acquiescence in their mass destruction. Asians speak many languages, their cultures and traditions exhibit great variety: they cannot be assembled under a single banner.

My final observation is that if Asian Americans are the "model minority," if they are conceived of as separate and apart from other Americans, be they Chicano, Black, American Indian or Anglo, they are prevented from full participation in the new form of higher education which has arisen and only could emerge in America. America Is In The Heart, written by the Filipino Carlos Bulosan, speaks of the feelings he had toward his adopted country, his desire to be a part not separate from. Asian Americans should continue to excel, where they have ability; they should excel, as all other human beings do, not only in mathematics and science. The sentiments, perception and capacity for creating art, literature, music and discoveries in the social sciences are not absent from the Asian American heart.

CHIZUKO IZAWA

Professor of Psychology at Tulane University, Dr. Chizuko Izawa received her B.A. degree in 1960 from the University of Tokyo and her Master's and Ph.D. Degrees from Stanford University in 1962 and 1965 respectively. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley from 1967 to 1968.

Professor Izawa taught at San Diego State University from 1965 to 1967, and State University of New York at Buffalo from 1968 to 1972. She became Associate Professor of Psychology at Tulane University in 1972 and was promoted to full professor in 1980. She has single-authored more than 42 articles and co-authored 13 articles in scholarly journals. She has been invited to lecture and present papers at numerous symposiums, meetings and conferences. She is also an editoral referee for a number of scholarly journals.

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS: MYTH OR REALITY?

A Perspective of an Asian/ American Academician

by
Chizuko Izawa
Professor of Psychology
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana

President Tsai, Under-Secretary Wright, Provost and Academic Vice President Barrozo, and members of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, I am very honored to be here this afternoon to consider educational excellence of Asian Americans. In the sense that I am a Japanese American myself, the topic seems to have a special significance and relevance.

I am most proud that I came from Japan and that I am an American. I will share some thoughts with you based, in part, on my own direct experience not only as an Asian immigrant professional, but also as a mother reforming two Asian street children adopted from a Korean orphanage which had considerable difficulty in finding their adoptive parents, because the children were too old and too difficult to be adoptable.

As a psychologist, I would like to consider a hypothesis than an achievement of any individual, academic or otherwise, is likely to be a product of at least the following three factors: first, the genetic factor, second, the environmental factors including the cultural heritage and historical background, and third, the motivational factors. The last two may be highly interrelated and interactive.

Before I discuss any of these factors, let me set our stage right by having information as to what percentage constitutes the minority population in this country. According to the last census by the United States Department of Commerce, taken in 1980, the total population of the United States is 226.5 million. Of the total, 46.3 million people, that is 20% or the U.S. population, belong to ethnic minority groups. The breakdowns of these ethnic minorities are as follows: The largest minority group consists of 25.5 million Blacks, which occupy 55% of the total minority population; the second largest minority group is that of Hispanics with 14.5 million people, or 31.31% of the total minority groups. The third largest is 3.5 million Asian/Pacific Islanders with 7.6%, and the next is 1.4 million American Indian/ Alaskan natives, or 3% of the minority population. The remaining 14.7%, or 6.8 million people belong to all other ethnic minorities in the United States.

Some population estimates, including California Economy which came out in 1982, indicate that by the year 2000, these ethnic groups will constitute 25% of our population.

As of 1985, Asian Americans are more than 5.1 million in number, constituting 2.1% of the entire U.S. population. Please see Table 1 of the handout for breakdowns. Just in case you are interested, an estimated 36% of these Asian Americans live in California today, followed by 13.1% in Hawaii, and 9.4% in

21

New York. The rest of them have settled in Illinois, Texas, New Jersey and Washington in descending order.

Now, after realizing that Asian Americans constitute only 2.1% of the total population, let us consider whether the genetic factor is responsible for Asian American's excellence. According to Arthur Jensen, my ex-colleague at the Institute of Human Learning at the University of California in Berkeley and Professor of Educational Psychology there, Asians are genetically superior! Based on a large number of Asian children, 500 in San Francisco and 8,000 in Hong Kong, as compared with 1,000 white American children in Bakersfield, California, Jensen found that the children with Asian backgrounds averaged stunning 10 I.Q. points higher on the average than the whites, and believes that there are "genetic differences" in the mental maturity rate between Asians and whites. Although he is a controversial figure, I know that Jensen conducts his studies carefully, and his results are convincing and overwhelming. If you are an Asian American, I bet you love his results and interpretation! And you may brag about being in a superior group!

Asian Americans superlative performance is not limited to Intelligence (IQ) Tests; may they be scholastic aptitude tests, various achievement tests, or grade point averages, Asian Americans are excelling everywhere. Their strengths in math, science, computer, and related areas are truly staggering. One example suffices to illustrate this point. In 1985, 70% of Asian American 18-year-olds took Scholastic Aptitude Tests to enter universities and colleges, in contrast to only 28% of all 18-year-olds. The average math score of Asian-American high school seniors in 1985 was 518 out of a possible 800, which was a whopping 43 points higher than the general average.

Enrollments in these areas in major American universities are also impressive. For example, at the University of Washington, 20% of all engineering students are of Asian descent, while at the University of California at Berkeley, the figure climbed to be 40%. Just think: a minority group which constitutes only 2.1% of the population can prevail 40% at one of the major university's engineering school! It is truly earth-shaking. Other major universities such as Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, Brown and others could not stand too many excellent Asians around, and imposed Asian Americans quota to limit their enrollments. Even this highly discriminatory practice could not conceal the undeniable excellence of Asian American students.

There is yet another dramatic index to measure educational excellence, i.e., the number of the winners of the Westinghouse Science Talent Competition, the nation's oldest and most prestigious high school competition. Since 1981, 20 Asian American students have been among the 70 scholarship winners in this competition. The most spectacular ones occurred in 1986: The top five places were swept by all Asian Americans.

Given this never ending list of examples of truly remarkable positive statistics, we encounter the inescapable answer to the question posed by the title of this symposium. If educational excellence of Asian Americans is not reality, what is!

On the other hand, there is another side of reality, in that not all Asian American students are super genius, whiz kids. There are many average and below average students as well. Just as any other ethnic group of American, Asian Americans contribute to the nation's drop-out rates also. It would be unfair, however, if I do not add the fact that the statistics in the negative areas are much smaller proportionally among Asian Americans as compared with the conterparts of the other Americans. This, in turn, points out again the same reality that Asian Americans excel the other racial groups in terms of disproportionately small negative statistics, in addition to disproportionately large positive ones we have already discussed.

Granted this reality, the next logical question to ask is: From where does the undeniable excellence of Asian Americans come? To attribute this entirely to the genetic factor which Jensen believes in seems to me exceedingly simplistic. Much more seems to be involved. To explore the other factors which may be responsible for the transparently clear educational excellence of Asian Americans, it would be informative to review briefly Asian American's history.

Just as all peoples in the United States, except native Indians and Eskimos, Asian Americans were immigrated to this land initially. The first of Asian immigrants were Chinese who began to arrive in the late 1840's. They were mostly poor and uneducated male peasants, without families, but their influx was halted after a virulent anti-Chinese movement resulted in an exclusion act in 1882.

The next Asians, Japanese immigrants, filled the vacuum of cheap laborers who arrived mostly between 1880 and 1920 in Hawaii and on the U.S. Mainland. They came with their wives or married subsequently through "picture-bride" from Japan. In 1924, they too suffered from a U.S. Congressional exclusion act.

Of the Filipinos who immigrated from the early 1900's to mid 1930's, the first few were students, but larger numbers were cheap laborers, just as the earlier Chinese and Japanese, but then again another Congressional exclusionary act was issued, and most of the pre-war major immigrants came to a halt.

Because of intense anti-Asian hostility, many of the Asian children were forced to attend segregated Oriental schools. With the outbreak of World War II, anti-Asian hostility lessened toward the Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans who started immigrating in 1902. However, hostility intensified against the Japanese resulting in the incarceration of over 110,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast in detention camps.

With the end of World War II, legal discrimination against Asian Americans gradually subsided, including alien land laws and naturalization rights. The most significant of all was the passage in 1965 of a more equitable immigration law, which finally lifted the previous discriminatory restrictions against Asians. As a result, in part, immigration from Asia, particularly from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and the Phillipines saw unprecendented tremendous increases. Much of the several-fold increase in the Chinese, Filipino, and Korean populations in the United States since 1965 has been the result of this recent immigration.

There has also been an influx of over 500,000 Indochinese into this country since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Large numbers of Asian immigrants and refugees continue to pour into this country, and they are the main reason for

the enormous population increases of the Asian Americans. Between 1980 and 1985, the Asian American population has grown by 48.5%, affirming Asian Americans to be the fastest growing minority in the country, in spite of their relatively low fertility rates. In this same five year period, growth among refugees was 158.8% for the Vietnamese, 358% for the Laotian, and 902% for the Cambodian.

As a consequence, over 50% of the current Asian Americans are recent immigrants, with a supply of new immigrants being added constantly. This particular aspect constitutes both strength and weakness of this group of Americans.

This is a weakness, since newly arrived immigrants from Asian countries encounter two highly difficult problems: The obstacle that new arrivals immediately experience is the English language which must be learned in short order. This is the most basic prerequisite for surviving in America. Years of intense struggles in acquiring English are unavoidable. For Asians, to learn English after the critical period of natural language acquisition is particularly difficult. Unlike immigrants from Europe, Asians cannot expect much help from their mother tongue in acquiring English, because there are no common properties between their old and new languages.

The second obstacle is the racial prejudice ever pervasive in this Anglo-oriented society. Both of these obstacles stand very firmly against newly arrived Asian immigrants.

Yet, these trying struggles can serve as the strength ultimately. Many Asian immigrants manage to convert these seemingly unsurmountable obstacles into their advantage. That is, they manage to generate tremendous amounts of energy and self-determination in overcoming them, and work ever harder than any other group of Americans. In the process, Asian immigrants succeeded in not only learning their second langugage, English, but also learning well everything else at school and elsewhere.

Another advantage for newly arrived Asian immigrants is that they bring their highly desirable cultural heritage from their homelands, including their family cohesion and their philosophy that the success in education is the prerequisite for success in life, as well as their work ethics. Namely, they work hard, without complaining.

America is the most wonderful country on earth, and provides the best opportunity for each individual in the world, and that is the reason why you came to this country, and so did Asian Americans, including myself. There were roughly two types of immigrants who came to this country. One type consisted of those who were poor and could not be successful in their own homeland and those who were defeated by the ruling power, escaped from it, and wished to seek job possibilities in America. A great majority of immigrants who arrived early before World War II belonged to this type, and they were quite willing to do hard manual work which other Americans refused to do, with very cheap wages. That is the reason why they were all welcomed at the beginning. However, as their hard work brought them success, it, in turn, invited hostility from other Americans, who could not compete with Asian immigrants. The hostility led to halting their immigrations one by one by the U.S. Congressional exclusion acts.

Another type of Asian immigrant is more recent, consisting of middle-class Asians usually well educated in their homeland. Unlike the first type, the Asian immigrants in this category had jobs in their homeland, but they sought more freedom and better opportunities for themselves and for their offsprings. They are often highly educated professionals, doctors, scientists, engineers, professors, artists and others.

Independent of the presence or absence of their education in their home countries in Asia, Asian immigrants do work very hard, respect authority, follow the job instructions faithfully and fulfill their responsibilities conscientiously, often far beyond the call of duty.

Other general characteristics of Asian immigrants are those of strong family cohesion centering around children: The group concept and team-play ideals are repeatedly emphasized, and above all, education of children becomes the central concern of the whole family. Many scholars attribute these to both Confucius and Buddhism influences.

It is important to note that children's education is a primary concern of the whole family for Asians and Asian-Americans alike, independent of parents education. To elaborate this point, I must point out that the educational excellence of Japanese children dates back as much as one century, and was apparent among very early immigrants. What distinguished the Japanese immigrants then was that unlike other Asian immigrants, they brought their wives with them or invited their future brides from Japan, and therefore, they could maintain their family structure from the beginning. Furthermore, although poor, they were not peasants without jobs. They were primarily farmers, but the Japanese government encouraged their immigration as a national policy. They came to this land with the full intention to stay permanently. In addition, notice also that before the turn of the century, the Japanese already had realized the necessity of education, and the compulsory education for every Japanese child has long been established prior to their immigration.

For these reasons, it was not surprising, as you can see in Table 2 of the handout, already in the 1940's census, Japanese American males managed to excel over all other American males in the number of school years they completed. The Japanese Americans maintained their superior statistics throughout, and other Asian Americans followed the suit, and by the time of the 1970 census, the Asian Americans as a group surpassed the white and other Americans. This trend was maintained subsequently, as seen in Table 3 which shows you the latest U.S. census conducted in 1980. As a group, the Asian American youth both in 16-17 and 20-24 years of age attend school longer than all other American counterparts.

After reviewing the history of Asian immigration, knowing family and social structures in person, as well as being raised and educated in Japan, along with being also educated and teaching as a university professor for more than two decades in the United States, I can safely state that Asian American's educational excellence today may be attributable not to the genetic factor, but to their environmental factors with the intense emphasis on education, combined with their self-determination and their never-ending hard work. The last aspects are particularly prominent, when Asian Americans are striving for excellence and recognition in the face of hardships.

I will cite two types of evidence to reject the explanation based either on the genetic factor or on Asian races specific factors. As a Chicago study indicates, for example, with third-generation Asian Americans, as Asian immigrants assimilate to the American mainstream, their achievements diminished noticably.

Another powerful evidence to support my position is that we witnessed an almost identical phenomenon, educational excellence of Jewish Americans who began immigration from East Europe in the 1880's. Just as the Asians, the Jews regarded education as the key to success, and firmly believed in hard work and value the role of the family.

In this context, I must quote Westinghouse's C.C. Newton, in announcing the winners of the 1986 Westinghouse Science Talent Search Competition when all the top five places were occupied by Asians. He was quoted by the New York Times as saying: "In the early years of the search, the winners tended to be sons and daughters of Jewish refugees. Now we are finding that they are the sons and daughters of immigrants from Asia."

What I would like to stress in concluding my talk today is: It is not necessary to have yellow skin and slanted eyes to excel in education. Any person of any color or of any national origin with normal intelligence who works extraordinarily hard and strives for excellence will achieve a high level of success in education. Indeed, Heaven helps those who help themselves.

In this sense, excellence or success in education or otherwise attributing to any racial group is likely to be nothing but myth. In that spirit, I am most thrilled by many recent success stories of Asian immigrants. Their presence is a great inspiration and blessing for American society as a whole.

Thank you.

Table 1
Asian American Population Estimates by the Population Reference Bureau
September 30, 1985

Ethnic Group	Number	Percent	% increase in no. 4/1/80-9/30/85
*All Asians	5,147,900	100.0	48.5
Chinese	1,079,400	21.0	32.9
Filipino	1,051,600	20.4	34.5
Japanese	766,300	14.9	7.0
Vietnamese	634,200	12.3	158.8
Korean	542,400	10.5	51.8
Asian Indian	525,600	10.2	35.7
Laotian	218,400	4.2	358.0
Kampuchean	160,800	3.1	902.2
All other	169,200	3.3	64.8

* 2.1 percent of total U.S. population (239,447,000)

Table 2
Median School Year Completed for Males,
25 Years and Older

RACE	1940	1950	1960	1970
White	8.1	9.3	10.7	12.1
Black	5.3	6.3	7.4	9.4
Japanese	8.8	12.2	12.5	12.5+
Chinese	5.5	7.0	9.2	12.4+
Filipino	7.4	7.3	8.8	12.2+

Sources: 1940-1960, Schmid and Nobbe (1965), p.914 (excluding Hawaii and Alaska); 1970, U.S. Census (including Hawaii and Alaska).

Table 3
School Enrolment of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans Aged 16-17 and 20-24: 1980

Population	Percent enrolled in school	
	Aged 16-17	Aged 20-24
White	89.0	23.9
Black	87.9	21.1
Hispanic	80.2	18.2
Japanese	96.2	48.0
Chinese	96.0	59.8
Filipino	92.8	27.1
Korean	94.9	40.1
Asian Indian	92.2	44.5
Vietnamese	90.2	41.8

Source: Bureau of the Census. 1980 Census of Population. PC80-1-C1. *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 123, 133, and 180.

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE OF ASIAN AMERICANS
MYTH OR REALITY?:
An Annotated Bibliography

by
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"Excellence" is defined to mean several related things. From the educational standpoint, at the level of individual learners, say Asian Americans; it means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace.[1] Are we being presumptuous in coining the phrase, "educational excellence of Asian Americans"? Whether it is a myth or a reality remains to be seen.

At best we can provide a select list of sources that illustrate perceptions of individuals as reflected in the literature. The bibliography includes articles, comments, and news items that are generally available. Entries are annotated and are arranged in alphabetical order by author or title.

"Asian Americans: a 'model minority'," Newsweek (December 6, 1982)100:39-42, 51.
Explains the reasons for the success of Asians as the fastest-growing immigrant group and the continuing acculturation, adjustment, and assimilation problems that go with it.

"Asian-Americans: Are They Making the Grade?" U.S. News & World Report (April 2,1984)96:41-47.
Discusses how the 'quiet' ethnic group is pushing its way into the mainstream.

"Asian-Americans Lead the Way into Educational Attainment," Phi Delta Kappan (March 1976)67:546.
Newsnotes on information about Asian Americans as reported in Asian Americans: Growth, Change and Diversity, a publication of the Population Reference Bureau, Inc. and from the results of the Northwestern University studies of two public schools.

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1 A Nation at Risk," in The Great School Debate, Which Way for American Education? Edited by Beatrice and Ronald Gross. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985. p.29-30.

Bell, David A., "The Triumph of Asian-Americans," New Republic (July 15,1985) 193:24-31; also in Current (November 1985) p.33-39.
Discusses issues relating to Asian American students, particularly - college admissions, how they fair in S.A.T. [Scholastic Achievement Test] and their participation and success in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search.

Berger, Joseph, "Excellence and Equality: a Conflict," The New York Times (March 4,1987) A1, B10.
Deals with the criteria for college admissions and how the Asian students fair in comparison to other students at Columbia University, Julliard School and at the Bronx High School of Science.

Biemiller, Lawrence, "Asian Students Fear Top Colleges Use Quota System," The Chronicle of Higher Education (November 19,1986)33:1, 34-36.
Focuses on the charges made by some Asian students that elite colleges and universities purposefully limit admission of students of Asian descent based on the quota system.

Brand, David, "The New Whiz Kids," reported by Jennifer Hull, Jeannie Park and James Willwerth. Time (August 31,1987 cover story]) p.42-51.
Describes why Asian American students are doing so well at schools and colleges and how much it costs them. Features representative Asian Americans (by nationality) who have succeeded in their respective fields of study.

Butterfield, Fox, "Why Asians are Going to the Head of the Class," The New York Times Education Life (August 3, 1986) p.18-
Attempts to explain the reasons behind the success of Asian American students. The author contends that the question remains, "Will they continue with their record of achievement as they are assimilated into American society?"

Chun, Ki-Taek, "The Myth of Asian American Success and Its Educational Ramifications," IRCD [Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged] Bulletin (Winter/Spring 1980)15:1-12. ED193 411
Examines the empirical basis of the successful model minority contention against its historical background and explores the consequences of the belief.

"Confucian Work Ethic: Asian-born Students Head for the Head of the Class," Time (March 28,1983)121:52.
Contends that academic success among Asians may be attributed to "nurture than nature" and not to genetic superiority as claimed by some. Respect for education and for the elderly are two qualities that native-born Asians value so highly.

Delatiner, Barbara, "My 3 Sons: A Chamber Trio," The New York Times [L.I. section] (December 26,1986) p.6.
Illustrates the talent of three brothers not only as classical musicians performing on the chamber music circuit as the Elmwood Trio but also as students in their chosen careers.

Dornbusch, Sanford M. [and others], "The Relation of High School Academic Performance and Student Effort to Language Use," April 1987. 45 p. ED286 973.
This report is part of a larger study on the impact of family structures and processes on the social and academic performance of American high school students, focuses on Asian- and Pacfic-American achievement in high school. Includes some findings and suggestions for future study.

"A Formula for Success: Asian American Students with Academic Honors Cope with Mixed Blessings of Achievement," Newsweek (April 23,1984)103:77.
Describes the factors that contribute to Asian achievement and how success can work against them.

French, Howard W., Thirty two from 24 Colleges Named Rhodes Scholars," The New York Times (December 8,1986) B20.
News item about a twenty-one year old Vietnamese refugee enrolled at the Air Force Academy as among those chosen.

Graubard, Stephen G., "Why do Asian Pupils Win Those Prizes?" The New York Times (January 29.1988) op. ed.
Comments on why Asian pupils qualify as finalists in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search. The author sees the need "for a more candid and balanced analysis of how and why race, ethnicity, religion and emmigrant experience continue to play as major forces in the late twentieth century America."

Grogon, D., "Brain drain for the United States," People Weekly (April 21, 1986) p.25.
Draws attention to the winners of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search of 1986.

Hsia, Jayjia, Fine Tuning the Future Agenda for Equity Research in Higher Education: Asian Americans and Cross-cultural Perspectives. Paper presented at the 69th Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, Illinois, March 31-April 4, 1986. ED261 628
Considers how college attendance patterns, areas of study, and abilities of Asian Americans compare with general student population in selective institutions and in large urban community colleges.

Hsia, Jayjia, The Silent Majority: Asian Americans in Education and Work. 1986. [Opinion paper] ED261 124

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Kan, Stephen, and William: T. Liu, "The Educational Status of Asian Americans: an Update from the 1980 Census," .P/AAMHRC [Pacific/Asian American Mental Health Research Center] Research Review.(July/October 1986) 3:21-24.
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Lindsey, Robert, "College Accuses of Bias to Stem Asian's Gains," The New York Times (January 9,1987) AlO.
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McLeod, B., "The Oriental Express: Asian-American Immigrants are Seen as a 'model' Minority on a Fast Track to Success, Their own View is less than Idyllic". Psychology Today (July 1986)26:8.
Includes materials relating to immigrant values.

Maykovitch, Minako K., "Asian Americans - Quiet Americans?" in Ethnic American Minorities, A Guide to Media and Materials. ed. and comp. by Harry A. Johnson. New York: Bowker, 1976. p.71-132.
The author argues that "Today [as of 1976], by conventional indicators of income and style of life, Asian Americans are being touted as 'model minorities' to be imitated by other minorities". Includes a good bibliography of print and non-print materials on Asian Americans p. 89-132.

"The Model Minority," [A segment of 60 Minutes as broadcast over CBS Television Network, February 1, 1987]. Produced by Grace Diekhaus. New York: CBS, 1987. p. 9-16 of Transcript.
Documents the interview with three Asian youths or students who came to this country with their families as 'Boat people'. Concludes with a note to the success of 'The Model Minority'.

Nakanishi, Don T., and Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi, The Education of Asian and Pacific Americans: Historical Perspectives and Prescriptions for the Future. Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1983. 141 p.
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Nishi, Matsunaga, "The Educational Disadvantage of Asian aad Pacific Americans," P/AAMHRC Research Review, (January 1982) 1:4-5.
Notes that selective use of data has contributed to the mistaken view on the educational status of Asian/Pacific Americans.

Oxnam. Robert B., "Why Asians Succeed Here," The New York Times Magazine (November 30, 1986) 72-
Discusses the broader aspects of cultural interaction and emphasizes that Asian values, work ethic and strong family ties are key factors in Asian American achievement.

Peng, Samuel [and others], "School Experiences of Asian American High School Students," U.S. Department of Education, 1981. ED252 635
Describes school experiences and performance of Asian American high school students.

Perlez, Jane, "School Basks in Spotlight of Contest," The New York Times (January 14,1988) Bl-B2.
Deals with eleven Asian finalists in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search for 1987 coming from one high school in Queens. In 1986, of the nine semifinalists coming from the same school, four were Asians. Less than 25 percent of the student population is Asian.

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Focuses on a 16 year old immigrant from Taiwan at the Bronx High School of Science. His three brothers have been finalists in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search in previous years.

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Wei, Deborah, "The Asian American Success Myth," Interracial Books for Children Bulletin (1986) 17:16-17.
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